

# Prelude to the last things: the Church of Scotland's mission to the Jews

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In the years between 1824 and the Disruption of 1843 the organizational structures within the Kirk which were to provide the framework of later nineteenth-century missionary activity attained to maturity. Foreign mission, Gaelic mission, urban mission and colonial mission each came under the direct control of a committee of the General Assembly. Not till 1840 did that most romantic of all missionary enterprises, the Jewish Mission Scheme, obtain this official recognition at Edinburgh.

Though the Church of Scotland was a relatively late entrant in the race to convert the Jewish people, a study of its early missionary efforts can tell us much about trends in Scottish Evangelical Christianity in the earliest years of Queen Victoria's reign, and illuminate one significant strand in the early Victorian's understanding of the world.

To Robert Buchanan 1838 was a very significant year for the Jewish people:<sup>1</sup>

"in that year, the venerable Dr Keith, the modern apostle of the circumcision, accompanied by the heavenly-minded McCheyne, and his other estimable colleagues, were sent forth to gather tidings of God's ancient people, and to bear to them the unwonted news that the national Christian church of an ancient kingdom had turned her heart towards them."

Keith and McCheyne represent the world of early nineteenth-century religious revivalism. This Jewish mission stems from a different mental world from that of the urban mission of Thomas Chalmers, the Indian mission of John Inglis, or the Gaelic mission of George Baird.<sup>2</sup>

Romantic in its conception, the scheme was even more so in its early practice. The representatives of the Kirk travelled to the Saviour's birthplace to present their presents of incense and

<sup>1</sup> Robert Buchanan, *The Ten Years' Conflict*, Glasgow, 1854, vol. i, p. 326. Robert Buchanan, D.D., 1802-1875, Evangelical minister at Glasgow, sometime editor of the *Scottish Guardian*, leading administrator in the Free Church. Alexander Keith, Evangelical minister of St Cyrus in Kincardineshire, preacher and popular writer. Robert Murray McCheyne, 1813-1843, Evangelical minister at Dundee, noted revivalist preacher.

<sup>2</sup> On the mission schemes generally see D. Chambers, "Mission and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1810-1843", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1971.

myrrh, mounted upon camels like the wise men of old. They were smitten by accident and disease in exotic lands of Asia and East Europe, and some owed their lives to the friendly offices of a charming and conveniently despotic Austrian Protestant princess in Catholic Hungary.<sup>3</sup> The Kirk's first official mission to the Jews would develop on the banks of the Danube, protected from the much-feared Romanist persecution by this benevolent princess.

No less romantic than the figures of these Scottish Wise Men to the East was the person of the Kirk's most famous Jewish missionary, popularly known as "Rabbi" Duncan. Much has been written of John Duncan, but a few vivid memories of one who knew him well must suffice as an introduction here:<sup>4</sup>

"his flowing beard, flowing garments, retreating hat, glittering eye, and great guttural tones, instantaneously suggested that this must be the ancient Wanderer himself — *Der Ewige Jude* — on his polyglot way across the world from the wall of China, or escaped into our modern age from the remote and spectral corridors of Talmudic lore".

This son of an Aberdeen shoemaker had known the deep mental distresses of an acute mind trained in the rigours of Scottish eighteenth-century philosophical traditions. Like many prominent Scottish Evangelicals of his generation he fought painfully through to a viable Christian faith; and when he felt able to contemplate the philosophical possibility that God might actually exist "danced on the brig of Dee for delight, though I feared that he might damn me." However narrow the orthodoxy of his enthusiastic associates in Jewish mission, Rabbi Duncan was broader-minded:<sup>5</sup>

"I am first a Christian, next a Catholic, then a Calvinist, fourth a Paedobaptist, and fifth a Presbyterian; and I cannot reverse this order."

Such was the problem presented to the guardians of Catholic orthodoxy at Budapest.

John Duncan gained access to Hungary on the pretext of preaching to Scotsmen. Behind what appears to modern man to be the romantic facade of Scottish Jewish Mission there lay the hard facts of Scotland's place in the industrial revolution which was making Great Britain mistress of the world. The first Scottish missionaries to the Jews were smuggled in as chaplains to the Scottish engineers and tradesmen who were constructing

<sup>3</sup> Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, Vol. vii, p. 713, has a brief but helpful sketch entitled "Jewish Missionaries"; R. M. McCheyne and A. Bonar, *Narrative of a Mission of Enquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839*, Edinburgh, 1843; *Edinburgh Witness*, 23rd May 1840, p. 3, for "report of the deputation" etc.

<sup>4</sup> A. Taylor Innes, *Studies in Scottish History*, London 1892, pp. 182-4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

the great iron bridge which would convert Buda and Pesth into Budapesth.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Candlish contrived the expedition of these Scottish crusaders in the East. They were to gather reliable information about world Jewry and to produce popular adventure narratives to "sell" the Jewish Mission Scheme to the Scottish people.<sup>7</sup>

Candlish saw the opportunity which offered in the health breakdown of the most popular revivalist preacher in Scotland: Robert Murray McCheyne of Dundee.<sup>8</sup> McCheyne and Andrew Bonar, his ally in the Palestine expedition, were Candlish's close friends.<sup>9</sup> McCheyne had been an exceptionally good Hebrew student at Edinburgh, and shared with this generation of Evangelicals a fascination with the subject of the literal fulfilment of biblical prophecies.<sup>10</sup> Alexander Keith, who accompanied their pilgrimage, was the foremost Scottish writer on the literal fulfilment of biblical prophecy in world history, and Candlish had early been fascinated by his writings.<sup>11</sup> The expedition to the Jews thus offered a chance for Scotland's leading revivalist to recover his spent health while simultaneously providing that his name, along with that of Keith, would ensure best-selling missionary adventure stories to advance the Jewish missionary cause.

The immediate origins of the intense interest in Jewish conversion can be traced to the activities of the London Jewish mission in the Holy Land early in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> David Brown, *Life of the Late John Duncan, LL.D.*, Edinburgh, 1872, p. 292.

<sup>7</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Church of Scotland*, April, 1839, p. 191, notice of Edinburgh sub-committee. Robert S. Candlish, 1806-1873, Evangelical minister in Edinburgh, Free Church leader and Professor of Divinity at New College, Edinburgh.

<sup>8</sup> William Wilson, *Memorials of Robert Candlish, D.D.*, Edinburgh, 1880, p. 68, letter of Andrew Bonar to D. MacLagan, 5th March 1874 (Bonar gained this information from McCheyne senior, see letter from McCheyne senior to Bonar, 22nd April 1843, in New College, Edinburgh, McCheyne Papers, letters bundle II); David V. Yeaworth, *Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843). A Study of an Early Nineteenth Century Scottish Evangelical*, New College Ph.D. thesis, July 1957, p. 264, referring to *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xv, p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> Correspondence in New College, McCheyne Papers; and Yeaworth thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Yeaworth, *op. cit.* p. 265.

<sup>11</sup> William Wilson, *op. cit.* p. 51, letter of Candlish to Urquhart, 3rd February 1834. Typical articles by Keith in *Presbyterian Review*, vol. vii, pp. 587-604, and vol. xii, pp. 641-68, but he wrote numerous books in this style.

<sup>12</sup> W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908*, London, 1908; G. Hedenquist (ed.), *The Church and the Jewish People*, London, 1952, and A. R. Eckhardt, *Christianity and the Children of Israel*, New York, 1948, provide more recent general surveys of the historical inter-relations between the two faiths.



From its inception by Andrew Thomson of St George's, Edinburgh, in 1810, the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* contained regular articles on world Jewry and related missionary activities. Notes on the London society and its Perth and Edinburgh auxiliaries were published in 1810, and in 1811-12 there were references to Haddington and Leith auxiliaries. By 1820 an Aberdeen auxiliary received publicity in the *Instructor*, and continuing publicity was given to the activities of the London society and the scope of the Jewish mission field.<sup>13</sup> Biblical prophetic "history" and Britain's providential role in world history came to be more closely linked during the first half of the nineteenth century, and "our Zion", the Kirk of Scotland, identified itself with this continuation of "prophetic history". Since British destiny and Jewish history appeared to be so closely linked, an increasing interest was taken in the children of Abraham.

The *Presbyterian Review* from its inception at Edinburgh in 1831 gave prominence to world Judaism and its continuing place in prophetic history. In 1833 a lengthy article entitled "The Conversion of the Jews" attempted to rouse Scottish interest in world Judaism by treating the London society's activities.<sup>14</sup> The increasing influence of English Evangelical writings on the Scottish mind of the thirties is illustrated by the series of works on Jewish and wider missions reviewed in November 1835. The review of Dr McCaul's *Sketches of Judaism and the Jews* introduced an emphatically "Reformation" emphasis into the account of the historic role of the Jews: by saving mankind through this most stubbornly unrighteous of all nations, God would demonstrate to the world that salvation was through His free grace alone, and independent of human attempts at righteousness. McCaul was approached for advice during the early days of the Kirk's Jewish mission organization.<sup>15</sup>

St Paul had said that the lost sheep of the House of Israel must be brought into the fold before the fulness of the Gentiles would be received. Or was it the other way around? The exegetes were confused. Dr John Muir of Glasgow contended that the Bible predicted that Jewish restoration would follow only after the complete salvation of the Gentiles, and hence refused to co-operate with his presbytery in this mission.<sup>16</sup> Scripture interpretation could be difficult, and one ardent mission contributor apparently identified "the lost sheep" with the Ten Tribes dispersed by the Assyrians. Nevertheless, his funds went to help the family of Judah.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 1839, pp. 490-1; David Brown, *John Duncan*, p. 281.

<sup>14</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, Vol. iv, pp. 426-433.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 1839, pp. 490-1; David Brown, *John Duncan*, p. 281.

<sup>16</sup> *Scottish Guardian*, 8th Feb. 1838, p. 48, cf. Lorimer in *ibid.* 2nd April 1838, p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> *Edinburgh Witness*, 31st May 1842, p. 2, col. 1.

The Presbytery of Dunblane avoided the problems of the precise relationship of the coming in of the Jews to the salvation of the Gentiles, in its 1838 overture:<sup>18</sup>

“The Presbytery of Dunblane taking into consideration the present state of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God, and the gracious promises of Jehovah respecting them, hereby humbly overture the venerable the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to adopt such measures as may to them, in their wisdom, seem most calculated to prepare the way for the glorious promised period, when the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles.”

The fact that this was the shortest and least controversial of the overtures coming before the 1838 Assembly may explain why it alone was read.<sup>19</sup> However, most pressure came from urban industrial areas around the Clyde,<sup>20</sup> supported by old Edinburgh friends of Jewish mission. Not a single overture on the subject came from the Highlands though Moray Synod submitted a long list of overtures. The overtures came from various parts of the Lowlands, rather than “all parts of the country” as claimed by Glasgow’s spokesman, John G. Lorimer.<sup>21</sup> They were associated with urban rather than rural Evangelicalism.

The fulfilment of ancient prophecies during those early decades of the nineteenth century, with their “wars and rumours of wars” was more apparent to the merchants of the Atlantic seaboard than to many others. This mission enterprise of the Kirk began with laymen of Glasgow,<sup>22</sup> and was taken over by prominent Evangelical clergymen. The overture of the canny Aberdonians in 1838 revealed another prominent reason for reaching out to the Jews:<sup>23</sup>

“whereas the history of His dealings towards them evinces that He has rewarded individuals and nations who have befriended them, even in their outcast state, and punished such as have evil-entreated or neglected them; . . . and whereas it appears, from the intimations of prophecy, that their conversion and restoration will most gloriously illustrate the

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, Printed Papers of Assembly, CH 1/2 174.

<sup>19</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xi, p. 117, Lorimer’s speech.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* and *Scottish Guardian*, 8th Feb. 1838, p. 48; 12th Feb. 1838, p. 53. 2nd April 1838, p. 110; 30th April 1838, p. 142; Greenock, Hamilton, Dumbarton and Glasgow presbyteries sent separate overtures to 1838 Assembly, see SRO, CH 1/2/174, index.

<sup>21</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xi, p. 118.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117, and *Scottish Guardian*, 8th February 1838, p. 48; David Brown, *John Duncan*, pp. 280-1.

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Record Office, CH 1/2/174. This overture contained other arguments also.

power, faithfulness, and grace of God, and promote signally the best interests of mankind, it is humbly overtured . . .”.

The Kirk's missionaries in India, situated among the Jewish trading settlements at ancient ports, were especially concerned that the Jews be brought into the fold as a sign to the heathen masses that sacred prophecy *was* being fulfilled in their sight.

The Jewish Mission Scheme was born amid gathering darkness on the Scottish ecclesiastical scene. The foreboding aroused by the decisions of the Court of Session on the Auchterarder “Intrusion” case distracted much press attention from Evangelistic endeavours. Though the loud protests of the foreign missionary, Alexander Duff, at the submergence of mission-publicity beneath a wave of Church-State polemic brought penitent apologies from the *Presbyterian Review* in 1839,<sup>24</sup> there was an atmosphere of impending crisis within those Kirk structures which had brought the schemes into being. The *Church of Scotland Magazine*, self-appointed guardian of the Kirk's interests, gave prominence to the Jewish mission in reporting the meeting of Assembly in May 1838. This prominence was probably due to the Glaswegian origins of both these Assembly reports and the 1838 Jewish mission crusade. A series of popular lectures by leading Glasgow preachers advertised the Jewish cause and the Glasgow-based *Scottish Guardian* publicised the early moves towards an official Kirk mission early in 1838. Lorimer of Glasgow did not lag behind Candlish of Edinburgh as a propagandist.

The Glasgow reporter on the 1838 Assembly placed the movement within the context of an ancient Scottish interest in the Jewish people. He went behind the recent London efforts to the early eighteenth-century Kirk: the days before “the dark reign of Moderation” began:<sup>25</sup>

“Little more than a century has elapsed since the Assembly used to appoint fast days, for the express purpose of deploring the blind and hardened state of that people, and supplicating converting grace in their behalf . . . We trust the period is not far away, when the Assembly may again cordially appoint a fast on behalf of Israel.”

The reporter turned aside to flagellate those Moderates in the Kirk who disapproved of such fasts as “popery” and superstition. There was a long historical tradition of formal prayer for the conversion of the Jewish people by ministers of the Church of Scotland, and the *Directory for Public Worship* enjoined such prayers as a regular part of the church service.

However, the Glaswegian reporter felt the need to justify the:

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Duff's criticism is in the introduction to *Farewell Address, on the Subject of the Church of Scotland's India Mission*, Edinburgh, 1839; *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xii, pp. 114-115 for reply.

<sup>25</sup> *Church of Scotland Magazine*, July 1838, p. 246.



Kirk's action in intruding into a field long cultivated by non-denominational societies. The institution of an official scheme would drain the coffers of Jewish mission societies, just as the official foreign and highland schemes had drained the resources of societies working in those spheres: "but to us it appears very clear, that the church, as a church, with less means will do more, and effect more permanent good, than the society with its ampler revenue". The argument is reminiscent of that of Thomas Chalmers on the Highlands Education Scheme in relation to Bible Society activities, at the General Assembly of 1824.

This claim for greater efficiency did not rest solely on the superior merits of presbyterial organization:<sup>26</sup>

"Inasmuch as the Church stands prominently out, registered for a blessing in the records of the covenant, . . . we may look for the presence and the blessing of Christ being with it in a more peculiar manner than with a society which cannot be regarded in any such capacity."

The Scottish Evangelical of the eighteen thirties could be a "High Church" man, as Robert Peel suspected. The Divine nature of the Church brought a blessing upon its activities. To be sure, there were practical advantages stemming from the Kirk's peculiar organization, and harmony in action flowed from its "basic principle of union": that union so soon to be shattered. But the Church was the instrument prophetically decreed to take salvation to all the nations, and missionary societies having played out their role in God's plan must "now decrease" like John the Baptist, and make way for the Body of Christ. Awe-stricken by the prospects of confusion opened up by the collision of Church and State courts which now appeared imminent in Scotland, the writer believed that the Kirk must trust upon God's Covenant promises for the preservation of his Zion:<sup>27</sup>

"Amid much to alarm us . . . we can fix our minds with comfort and confidence on her re-awakened zeal for Israel's good, as a pledge that God will yet maintain her cause. Will he suffer that church to be swept away, to which he has returned with many pledges of blessing and favour, and which he has stirred up to look upon the desolations of those 'who are yet beloved for their father's sakes?' Or just when that Church in providence has been thrust prominently forward to fight in his cause for nations, as such, recognizing the duty of acknowledging Messiah, will he suffer it to be overthrown . . .?"

The Scottish Evangelicals' traditional elevation of the Covenant

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

motif put them into more ready contact with the traditional rabbinical stream of Judaism, rather than the "liberal" or "reformed" European fringe.<sup>28</sup> The Kirk was at the centre of the continuing Israel.<sup>29</sup>

Scottish Evangelicalism was becoming a self-conscious and self-confident part of that newer Evangelicalism which pervaded English religious thinking:

"We consider the meeting of our General Assembly the most important event of the year, in its influence upon the Christianity of Scotland; and the interest which it excites must, we think, be shared by all who look upon Britain as the grand source of Protestant enterprise, and whose sympathies can be awakened by the guilt and degradation of immortal souls."

Despite the attempt to set the mission into an historic Scottish tradition, the writer's early eighteenth-century forebears would not have comprehended his "prophetic" view of history:<sup>30</sup>

"To a recovered orthodoxy of religious belief, we see added one circumstance after another of earthly grandeur and influence, till at last we behold an island, once hidden amidst the waste of waters, and the darkness of barbarity, almost beneath the notice of Roman ambition or curiosity, attain to a power and wealth, and civilization, which Rome never knew. Now, let those who have any belief in God's providence, tell us if there is no discovery of designing wisdom in the selection of *this* land, as the main depository of Protestant Christianity. . . ."

This was not the voice of John Calvin fighting for life in Geneva. The confident Glaswegian layman saw the mercantile centrality of Great Britain both as a providential gift and as a terrible responsibility. Already the uncompromising doctrine of "the Headship of Christ", to be repeated so often during the Disruption controversy, was clearly expressed with obvious conclusions both for missionary and church-state theory. The medieval *Ecclesia*, terrible as an army with banners, seemed about to awake from its long sleep.

Neither Lord Melbourne nor Sir Robert Peel would have come within miles of comprehending this Glasgow layman when he said:<sup>31</sup>

"Now, do we believe that the government of the world is carried on for the benefit of Christianity, that Christ is "Head over all things *to his Church*", and can we avoid the con-

<sup>28</sup> On contemporary streams of European Judaism as Scots saw them, see "Report of the Deputation to Palestine", *Edinburgh Witness*, 23rd May 1840, p. 3, col. 3, and adjacent McCheyne speech.

<sup>29</sup> *Church of Scotland Magazine*, April 1838, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.



clusion, that a stewardship beyond all exception momentous, was committed to our land for the right discharge of which all the advantages we have enumerated were intended as facilities?"

The pharisaic self-righteousness implicit in this neo-Zionist thought dominated the Evangelical press at the height of the Disruption battle, and many later passionate Free Kirk speeches. This was an extremist Evangelical statement, but the Jewish mission was largely a product of extremist energies.

The overtures from the presbyteries, and the sermons of the clergy supporting them, were usually more cautious in their handling of "prophetic history". But this scheme began with laymen of the city of Glasgow, and its earliest clerical supporters were men fascinated by visions of the literal fulfilment of biblical prophecies in the nineteenth-century world. To Glaswegian merchants the continuing covenant-relationship which gave Glasgow its place in the new phase of the providential plan of history depended upon them conscientiously undertaking evangelism wherever their ships sailed. Amid the gathering storm-clouds of church-state warfare, missionary activity was insurance against disaster, because Jehovah would not desert those who held to the covenants.

The Evangelical clergy who took up the cause were not so "worldly" in their prophetic visions. Men like "the heavenly minded McCheyne", or Lorimer of Glasgow, were mostly concerned with the saving of immortal souls before it was too late. Lorimer stressed the urgency to save Jewish souls in particular, because they stood pre-eminently in the path of God's wrath.<sup>32</sup> But many of these clergy did look for a spiritual "pay-off" for their missionary zeal in the East, in the form of "revival" in home parishes.<sup>33</sup>

Concern for the spread of the everlasting gospel, as the Church's primary function, was well illustrated in the concluding paragraphs of the report of the deputation sent to Palestine and East Europe:<sup>34</sup>

"Shall the Church of Scotland be ashamed to be like Paul, the pattern of all Christian ministers . . . Shall we not rather resolve, that whatever others do, as for us and our people, we will be followers of Paul, even as he was of Christ — love as he loved — pray as he prayed."

<sup>32</sup> *Scottish Guardian*, 2nd April 1838, p. 110, Lorimer speech before Glasgow presbytery.

<sup>33</sup> *Edinburgh Witness*, 23rd May 1840, p. 3, col. 6, McCheyne: "Is it not a remarkable fact, that in the very year in which God put it into the hearts of the church to send a mission of kind inquiry to Israel, . . . God visited his people in Scotland by giving them bread in a way unknown since the days of Cambuslang and Moulin."

<sup>34</sup> Printed annual report to General Assembly, 1840, p. 30.

Though Paul was named, the wording and spirit was perhaps closer to that of Joshua entering the Promised Land. Paul might not have appreciated being placed as intermediary. None denied this basic biblical call to mission. Fordoun was perhaps the most notorious of Moderate presbyteries at this time, but it was the home-presbytery of Rev. Alexander Keith of St Cyrus, who travelled to Palestine as representative of the Kirk. It may be pure coincidence that the overture from this staunchly Moderate presbytery argued for a Jewish mission in more characteristically New Testament terms: God had declared that the Jews would be converted; all the spiritual blessings of Christians were a direct debt to the Jews; the emphatic command of Scripture enjoined Christians to strive and pray for Jewish conversion; and the receiving of the Jews into the Church would be life from the dead to the Gentile nations.<sup>35</sup> This statement simplifies the ideology of the ardent young Evangelical ministers who set out upon their pilgrimage to the East. But the Fordoun overture would never have been passed by the presbytery's tough Moderate leaders unless they could endorse its sentiments.

The most questionable arguments for Jewish mission seem to have been associated with Evangelical laymen, both urban and rural. The prominent Aberdeen Evangelical, Professor Daniel Dewar, rebuffed arguments of the Berwickshire Evangelical elder, Buchan of Kelloe, about Jewish restoration to Palestine being necessary fulfilments of prophetic history.<sup>36</sup> But Dewar's own close associate, Alexander Thomson of Banchory, seems to have held similar crude notions of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. Thomson tried to persuade the Duke of Wellington to "restore" the Jews to Palestine.<sup>37</sup>

Scottish Evangelicals generally agreed that British power was God-given, and must therefore be used to forward world-wide evangelism, and not least Jewish evangelism. James Bryce, recently retired from Calcutta, met only with unpopularity when in 1838 he tried to defend the East India Company's more cautious diplomacy in dealing with "heathen superstitions".<sup>38</sup> The Evangelical missionaries in India keenly supported the Jewish mission. Alexander Duff, contending that the charity of the Kirk was far from being overstrained, and that missionary schemes rather encouraged than competed with each other,<sup>39</sup> saw no reason to neglect the harnessing of British power and influence for evangelism to heathen and to Jew. John Wilson at Bombay suggested that because of its large Jewish mercantile population

<sup>35</sup> Scottish Record Office, CH 1/2/174, index to overtures.

<sup>36</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xi, pp. 119-120.

<sup>37</sup> George R. Smeaton, *Alexander Thomson of Banchory*, Edinburgh, 1869, pp. 172-4.

<sup>38</sup> *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, 1838 General Assembly Supplement, pp. 22-3, 46-7.

<sup>39</sup> *Scottish Guardian*, 2nd April 1838, p. 110, Lorimer speech.

under British rule, Bombay would be an ideal site for the original Jewish enterprise.<sup>40</sup> When news arrived of the capture of Aden, Wilson hurriedly wrote home to suggest this new British strategic site as the ideal spot;<sup>41</sup> and it was planned that Wilson meet up with one of the earliest Jewish missionaries in the vicinity of Beirut.

Imperial expansion does not of itself explain why the Kirk should have ventured to set up its own Jewish mission, when the London-based mission had been for many decades established in Scotland and when its Scottish auxiliaries already had financial responsibilities at home and in Eastern Europe. The interests of Candlish and Lorimer could have found outlets in the societies. Unlike some contemporary English Evangelicals these men thought in Church-centred terms, partly on the pragmatic grounds that a Church-controlled mission would be more efficient, and partly on the theological grounds that mission was a basic function of the national Church, as such.<sup>42</sup> The frenzy of anti-dissenter feeling among Kirk members of all parties during the eighteen thirties had made non-denominational societies suspect, thus threatening the financial resources of the missionary societies. At a time when staunch Evangelicals of Glasgow and Edinburgh were most heatedly in conflict with their old Voluntary friends in the societies, the Jewish-mission auxiliaries of Scotland were financially undermined by denominational strife. The Scottish missionary societies to the Jews invited official Kirk help, and consequent security, at this stage;<sup>43</sup> as did the long-established Inverness Education Society around this time, and the Scottish Missionary Society a few years earlier. The Glasgow Missionary Society, working mainly in South Africa, split into an Established and a Voluntary wing.

Following immediately upon the Voluntary conflict between Scottish "establishment" and "dissent" during the early and mid thirties, came the Spiritual Independence fight of the later thirties, culminating in the schism known as the Disruption. By 1838-9 the decisions on the Auchterarder case created an air of apocalyptic excitement in Scotland, as Churchmen prepared for imminent national ecclesiastical disaster. Early in 1840 Thomas Chalmers told Sir James Graham that, their positions being what they were, he could not see any possibility of reconciliation

<sup>40</sup> Wilson wrote many letters pleading the case of the Bombay Jews. National Library of Scotland, manuscript 7531, ff. 215-8, for an example of Feb. 1839; indexes to the *Home and Foreign Missionary Record* for 1841-2 have other examples.

<sup>41</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xii, p. 136. The fall of Aden simultaneously inspired many Evangelical minds with the conviction of a providential dispensation.

<sup>42</sup> Note the pride in the fact that the Kirk was first to undertake a Jewish mission as a *whole church*. Printed Annual Report, 1839, p. 6, and note 1 above.

<sup>43</sup> *Scottish Guardian*, 30th April 1838, p. 142, "Presbytery of Edinburgh".



between the views of the Edinburgh Assembly and London government.<sup>44</sup> Waves of religious revival began sweeping various parts of Scotland around this time, as the Evangelical press and platform propaganda built up to a crescendo. The Marnoch controversy took this excitement into the remote Moderate-dominated back country of Strathbogie and inland Aberdeenshire. The rapid growth of Jewish mission enthusiasm was certainly linked with this revivalist phenomena and the air of apocalyptic excitement which so alarmed the Aberdeenshire Moderate clergy.<sup>45</sup> McCheyne claimed that the "revival" was itself partly God's gift in return for the outreach to the Jewish people.

The first Jewish missionary auxiliaries in Scotland were associated with the late eighteenth-century revivalist upsurge; and the official scheme was closely associated with the outbreaks of revival which occurred in this period. As McCheyne indicated, the "revival" proper followed upon, rather than led to, the inauguration of the Jewish Scheme.<sup>46</sup> The two phenomena advanced contemporaneously till the Disruption, and afterwards in the Free Kirk. The earlier Kirk schemes owed much to the work of astute ecclesiastical statesmen like Inglis, Brunton, Baird, Lee, Chalmers, or Macfarlane, but the Jewish scheme arose in a grass-roots "revivalist" setting.

Free Church historians tended to interpret all the Kirk's missionary schemes as though they were products of this same conflict. But the missionary schemes' leaders, of both parties, had usually tried desperately to dissociate their missions from any ecclesiastical conflicts. Only the Jewish scheme actually arose in the conflict atmosphere, and its "revivalist" associations constantly broke through in the Evangelical press:<sup>47</sup>

"God's purpose to convert and gather in Israel being now hastening on to fulfilment, he is setting more watchmen on the ruined walls of Jerusalem — men of Nehemiah's spirit, who are to give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Our church has thus entered herself in the number of "the Lord's remembrancers", and this act cannot fail to bring us more of his favour. It will be another reason why he should not remove our candlestick out of its place; he may spare us, saying, "*For ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel*", I Sam. xv.6. Let us hope, also, that he may ever give *us* some drops of that shower of refreshing rain which is to revive Israel."

<sup>44</sup> C. S. Parker, *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham*, London, 1907, p. 380, Chalmers to Graham, 6th January 1840.

<sup>45</sup> New College, Edinburgh, McCheyne Papers, Letters bundle II, for a copy of the letter circulated by the Aberdeen presbytery's committee of inquiry, 1841. A published report of this committee also exists.

<sup>46</sup> Note 33 above.

<sup>47</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, vol. xi, p. 359; *ibid.*, vol. xii, p. 137 for Gordon's speech; *ibid.*, Vol. xi, p. 579.

The Headship of Christ, the mission of His Church, and religious revival and reform were at the forefront of attention as the Kirk descended into an abyss of conflict between 1838 and 1843.

The official committees of the Jewish Mission Scheme were heavily weighted to the Evangelical party from the beginning. The committee appointed by 1838 Assembly to consider overtures relating to the Jews and to recommend appropriate action to that Assembly, consisted of ten clergymen and eleven laymen.<sup>48</sup> Apart from the Moderator, Dr William Muir (perhaps most "evangelical" of all Moderates), and Dr Brunton of the Foreign Mission Scheme, the Moderate leader Dr George Cook was the only non-Evangelical minister. The lay members, mostly elders residing in Glasgow or Edinburgh, were well-known members of the Evangelical party; though not all seceded in 1843. The Evangelical zealot, Lorimer of Glasgow, was chairman.

The Western sub-committee contained many of the original core of Glaswegian laymen who had proposed the scheme. The signatures of Candlish and Lorimer at the foot of the official full-committee report to 1840 Assembly indicate that the most fervid stream of both Glasgow and Edinburgh Evangelicalism was in control. The convener of the founding committee in the west was that long-time champion of Evangelicalism, Professor MacGill of Glasgow. He had especially asked to be appointed to this committee. He had earlier indicated his interest in Jewish mission to Thomas Chalmers, when telling the latter of a relative by marriage who was a converted Jew working as a Jewish missionary in Germany.<sup>49</sup>

The men who undertook the officially-sponsored "pilgrimage" to gather data on world Jewry were all well-known members of the Evangelical party: Rev. Alexander Keith of St Cyrus, Professor Alexander Black of Aberdeen, Rev. Andrew Bonar of Edinburgh, Rev. Robert McCheyne of Dundee, and Robert Wodrow the Glasgow merchant. Though both Black and McCheyne had passed through "Moderate" phases, they were staunch Evangelicals by this time.

There was little in the Jewish scheme, especially as it developed during the period of party conflict which preceded disruption, to attract Moderate leaders. Evangelical revivalists like Bonar, McCheyne, and Keith were held suspect by quieter Moderates. Leaders of Jewish mission like Candlish at Edinburgh and Lorimer at Glasgow were among the most partisan and outspoken opponents of Moderatism. The whole atmosphere of excitement and propaganda associated with the Jewish scheme

<sup>48</sup> Scottish Record Office, CH 1/1/86, p. 85; despite David Brown, *John Duncan*, p. 280, there had been no Assembly committee appointed in 1837.

<sup>49</sup> New College, Edinburgh, Chalmers Papers, Letters "Previous to the end of 1825", MacGill to Chalmers, nd.

alienated Moderate leaders from immediate participation, even had they found any leadership vacancies left by more militant missionaries. But, as the Fordoun presbytery overture of 1838 indicated, the most partisan of Moderate presbyteries was prepared to be associated with the mission's establishment.

Because of the open "party" war then in progress, one should not conclude that the absence of Moderates from the leadership meant that they were antipathetic to Jewish mission. In general the old Moderates held to an eighteenth-century Enlightenment tradition of historiography, of which the party's founder, Principal Robertson, had been a master-practitioner. This insulated many of them from the wilder notions associated with "prophetic history" as then interpreted. But this should not be over-stressed because not all Moderates of 1839 were of anything like the mental calibre of their party ancestors. Not all were devoid of a tendency towards the prevailing neo-Zionism.

Dr Joseph Paterson of Montrose, who in 1840 urged McCheyne to use his Hebrew knowledge in the Jewish cause, was a dedicated "party" Moderate.<sup>30</sup> In 1840 Robertson of Ellon seconded the official acceptance of the Jewish Committee report at Assembly, and despite the various "party" attacks on him at this time, Professor Hill of Glasgow did the same at 1841 Assembly. Both were key Moderate leaders. In 1842 Principal Haldane of St Andrews, among the more notorious old Moderate leaders, moved the adoption of the committee's annual report. Although the most prominent among the Moderate "politiques" did not associate themselves with the pre-Disruption Jewish mission, even Dr George Cook was prepared to acquiesce in the waiving of normal theological hall requirements in the special circumstances of some candidates for the Jewish mission field.<sup>31</sup> This was no small concession from one normally so constitutionally minded.

The Jewish mission which was initiated in Glasgow and Edinburgh presbyteries early in 1838, and stimulated by the 1838 Assembly Act appointing a deputation of enquiry to world Jewry, only became an official mission-scheme of the Kirk at the 1840 Assembly when the Disruption battle already raged. Not until 1841 were several missionaries actually working in Hungary, so that the scheme was barely established at the Disruption. All the Jewish missionaries seceded to the Free Kirk, as befitted their previous convictions, and this mission was hardest hit of all the schemes. The Edinburgh Moderate, John Hunter, for long Brunton's assistant minister, took over the convener's role after 1843. The Jewish mission had been so markedly an "Evangelical" scheme, in ideology, origins, and organization,

<sup>30</sup> New College, Edinburgh, McCheyne Papers, Letters bundle II, Paterson to McCheyne, 17th January 1840.

<sup>31</sup> *Edinburgh Witness*, 21st May 1842, p. 3.



that the Moderate party had to struggle to become acquainted with it. But Moderate leaders had never indicated any hostility to the scheme, and on formal occasions always supported the committee's activities. Their attitude was one of caution towards the revivalist enthusiasms of missionary leaders like McCheyne and Keith, rather than one of antipathy to the mission as such. More apocalyptic minds might look for salvation to the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven; but Moderates in general were long used, like the Sanhedrin in its relations with Pilate, to rely upon government and the established social order for their hopes of salvation.

The reality of the Jewish mission never came to match the magnificent visions of its founders; and its effects if any on world Judaism would be very difficult to assess. The first Kirk missionary, Rev. Daniel Edward, was ordained to the mission-field of Jassy in Moldavia in March 1841, and arrived there in August that year with his Jewish convert assistant Herman Phillip, to evangelize among the large Jewish community. Dr John (Rabbi) Duncan took two missionary students, Mr Allan of Glasgow and Robert Smith of Aberdeen, to Pesth soon afterwards.<sup>52</sup> Whatever the effects on Hungary's Jewish population some of the earliest Hungarian converts became public figures in Britain thereafter. Alfred Edersheim, author of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Select Preacher to the University of Oxford, Warburtonian Lecturer at Lincoln's Inn, and Lecturer on the Septuagint in the University of Cambridge, is perhaps the best known. But Adolph Saphir, B.A., Glasgow, D.D., Edinburgh, minister of Belgrave Presbyterian Church in London and author of *Christ and the Scriptures*, was also a noted figure in his day. Both men were baptized into the Kirk within a month of the Disruption.<sup>53</sup>

Though Hungary was the main scene of operations at the Disruption there had been for several years Jewish schools at Posen in Prussia and among the Beni-Israel community at Bombay. Wherever the Kirk went, the notion of primary education via Bible and catechism went along. Thus, when the Jewish convert who had been labouring in Silesia for a decade or so on behalf of Scottish presbyterian societies before being incorporated into the Kirk scheme became ill in 1841, an appropriate convalescence was planned for him: <sup>54</sup>

“he may be sent to Saltsbrun, in Silesia, where he will have the benefit of the mineral waters, and enjoy numerous opportunities of conversing with his brethren who reside in great numbers in that neighbourhood”.

But this was no Silesian sinecure, since Mr Cerf was to provide

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 22nd May 1841, p.3.

<sup>53</sup> Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. vii, p. 713 f.

<sup>54</sup> *Edinburgh Witness*, 22nd May 1841, p. 3.

schooling for the local Jewish children, and to assist in the translation of the Shorter Catechism into Hebrew, German and Yiddish. King James VI and I would doubtless have felt that this was continuing the old tradition of Scottish contributions to Christian literature, though he may have been puzzled as to what his translators were doing among the Silesians while there were still so many Highlanders at home.

The significance of the Scottish mission to the Jews, if indeed it has any today, must lie in the strange visions which led men into dangerous and exotic situations with the aim of evangelizing the scattered Jewish people. Not all those who contributed were Scottish visionaries. Lord Palmerston played his part by giving advice on whether there ought to be a mission to the Holy Land in 1841:<sup>55</sup> "every protection will, of course, be extended to British Christians, whether engaged in missions or commerce" but since the country was still a little unsettled "you should wait a month or so, before you undertook any actual enterprise." When even Palmerston appeared to be blessing the enterprise we need not wonder that Lorimer of Glasgow was jubilant; "we may now speak of, and even anticipate, consummations which, a few years ago, would, if mentioned in society, have exposed us to a charge of heathenism or insanity". One such marvellous consummation was that in January 1841, "Mr William Wingate, a merchant in Glasgow, moved by his love to the Lord, and to this ancient people" offered himself to the missionary cause, and set off to Berlin to study Hebrew and German.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Edinburgh Witness*, 22nd May 1841, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*